

those we serve, not spend trillions and leave future generations in debt.

HONORING ANTONIO "TONY" RANGEL

(Mrs. KIM of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Antonio "Tony" Rangel, a longtime veteran from the city of Placentia, who is now the namesake of American Legion Post 277.

Mr. Rangel served in the United States Army during the Korean war and has spent more than half of his life as a member of the American Legion.

Mr. Rangel has not only served our Nation, but also has long been a pillar of our Placentia community. He was named Placentia Citizen of the Year in 1989 and continues to live up to that title each and every day.

It is only fitting that the Post 277 building is officially the Antonio "Tony" Rangel Hall.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. Rangel for his service to our country and to California's 39th Congressional District.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLY).

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank my good friend from the State of Texas (Mr. GOHMERT.) It is always a pleasure to be with him.

Today I want to talk about something that is near and dear to all of us. Maybe I am exaggerating when I say dear to all of us. But I am referring to a Federal agency that at one time former Senator Orrin Hatch described as the most feared Federal agency in our country. I am talking about the IRS; I am talking about right now the operations of the IRS.

In recent months we have learned that the agency has yet to process millions and millions of tax returns filed over the past 3 years. People across this country have been waiting to receive money that is theirs far longer than is reasonable. The agency should be working night and day to catch up.

I want to take this opportunity also to thank my friends on both sides of the aisle, because for most people in our districts, we are the IRS. We are the people answering those tough questions and helping them navigate in an almost impossible Federal agency in order to get things done.

Now, at the same time as this backlog persists, the agency is doing things that take us back to the last time that Mr. Biden was in the White House, and we have returned to those bad, old,

dark days of the Obama administration when Lois Lerner and her cronies were targeting conservative, nonprofit organizations because of their political views.

Just weeks ago, the IRS was caught red-handed, once again. In a letter declining a nonprofit status to a Christian organization, the agency decried biblical teachings as a nonneutral, politically oriented form of speech. These bureaucrats had the audacity to say that the organization's Bible teachings about the Christian faith, which are shared by millions upon millions of Americans of all different political views, were too aligned with the Republican Party to warrant nonprofit status.

Now, upon learning of this shameful decision, my friend from Texas, KEVIN BRADY, and I joined Americans across this country to demand answers as to how the IRS could come to such an egregious conclusion. Thankfully, and only because of this oversight and the exposure to what happened, our legislative oversight and the public's righteous indignation caused this agency to reverse its course; but, again, only because of our oversight and the exposure to what was actually taking place within this agency.

This IRS needs more oversight and accountability if we are to expect it to do the right thing. But the one thing I want to explain to all of our citizens across the country, if you get a call from the IRS, understand that that call is not from the IRS. The IRS will only contact you by mail. When I go home, and I think all of my colleagues are the same, I hear people tell me, "The IRS called me." I say, "That is not the IRS. That is a scam."

But you know what? There are things we have to do. We have not only an obligation, we have a responsibility to improve all Federal agencies.

Now, it is sad to say that the only scandal entangling the IRS this year isn't the one I just talked about. In an outrageous criminal act, someone, either inside or outside the IRS, breached IRS systems and leaked the confidential tax records of thousands and thousands of Americans to a left-wing propaganda outlet, Pro Publica, which proceeded to publish these private financial details in pursuit of a political narrative on tax policy.

This is an astonishing breach of trust that should cause every American to wonder if his or her own tax information could be weaponized against them. It is not farfetched. When President Donald Trump's tax returns were leaked to The New York Times last year, I noted that if this could happen to the President of the United States, it could happen to any American.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here we are. In 2019, the late Representative John Lewis and I worked together to figure out how we could reform the IRS so that it would better serve our taxpayers. We worked as friends, set aside any political differences we may have

had, and authored the Taxpayer First Act, which was passed with overwhelming support from this entire Congress and signed into law by President Trump 2 years ago in July of 2019.

The primary intent of this legislation was to make the IRS a customer-service-oriented agency. Our tax system is a voluntary system. After all, this is one of the few Federal entities that Americans will interact with consistently for their entire lives. From their birth until their death they will have actions within the IRS.

There are few things more intimidating than having to resolve a dispute with the IRS, so making it a resource rather than an adversary was our chief aim. That is what we were trying to get to.

But how can an agency that takes years to process tax returns, leaks private financial records to damage certain taxpayers, and wields its vast power to punish people or organizations with certain political or religious views be seen as anything other than an adversary?

The IRS is one of the most powerful forces in our lives. I have heard this so many times when I go back home, and I am sure you have heard it, and I am sure most Americans feel the same way: People tell me, "I don't mind paying my taxes as long as those moneys that I put in get used the right way, but I do fear the agency with which I have to interact."

Let's work together to hold this agency accountable. It is not all members of the IRS who we are criticizing or who we are looking at right now. We are talking about certain things that happen within that agency that absolutely are terrifying to the average American.

We, as a body, representing everyone in this country, need to take a look at where it is that we are failing and where it is that this agency has failed and why it has become such an intimidating agency.

If you want to restore the faith in any of our agencies or any of the things that we do in our life, you do it by actually working within the framework of that agency and looking at what we can do as the personal representatives of the American people to cure the situation as it is now and make the IRS a service-based agency and not one of intimidation.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate so much those observations. It is so important for everybody to understand, the IRS is feared, and we learn through people like Lois Lerner that it is not always honest, and yet nobody has been held to account. I am hoping that at some point that will occur. I am so grateful to my friend from Pennsylvania.

At this time I yield to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BENTZ).

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the Nation's attention to a tragic event unfolding in my State of Oregon, the horrifically destructive Bootleg fire.